The Ladies' Page.

Farewell.

The boat went drifting, drifting over the sleeping sea,
And the man that I loved the dearest sat in the boat with me.

The shadow of coming parting hung over the great gray swell;
And the winds that swept across it sobbed only, farewell, farewell.

The boat went drifting, drifting in the lingering northern night
And the face that I loved the dearest paled with the paling light.

We strove to join light laughter; we strove to wake a jest;
But the voice that I loved the dearest rang sadly 'mid the rest.

The boat went drifting, drifting, while the dull skies lowered down,
And the "ragged rims of thunder" gave the rocky head a crown.

The boat went drifting, drifting, while to the dark'ning sky,
For the man that I loved the dearest, the prayer rose silently.

Oh! true, strong hand I touch no more; brave smile I may not see:
With the God who governs time and tide bring him back to my life and me?

A Shy Man's Story.

Randolph Braybrooke had the character of being the shyest man in the whole army. His shyness was perfectly painful. As a child he blushed and stammered when anybody spoke to him; and his shamefacedness grew rather than diminished as he came to man's estate. He was perpetually chaffed about it at school and at Sandhurst; even when he was a full-blown officer, with busby on head and sword on hip, his shyness continued. It was long before he could bring himself to give the words of command to a squad of recruits; when the colonel or adjutant wigged him he flushed scarlet, and could not find a word of justification in reply. This extreme shyness wore off, perhaps, but it never disappeared. As he got on in years and in rank, he found the greatest difficulty in saying unpleasant things to subordinates. He did not like to lecture a private, even; his subalterns could also get the better of him by asking him publicly for leave. He hated to be trotted out before others. He would manœuvre for weeks to avoid making a speech. Although always ready to subscribe liberally, he would never attend regimental festivities. He might be called upon to act as a host, which he detested; or to be civil to the ladies, to take them down to supper, or, worst of all, to dance. Nothing would induce him to become a lady's man. He was no misogynist, but he had a wholesome horror of the female sex. In the abstract, he respected, admired, possibly adored them all; but in the concrete, he would go miles rather than address a syllable to the most charming woman in the world.

Naturally, he had never married. He could never get through the preliminaries even, as to proposing; a legion of prospective mother-in-law and buckets of inspiriting maraschino would not have brought him up to the scratch. In the regiment it was quite a joke against him. Brother officer's wives, whom he occasionally faced—after knowing them for ten or a dozen years—always asked him when he was going to be married, and good-naturedly, or, as he thought, viciously, set traps for him by introducing him unexpectedly to pretty sisters or fascinating cousins, from whom he had always to escape by the skin of his teeth.

There was really no reason why he should not marry anybody he chose. He was not by any means a bad *parti;* of this world's goods he had a very decent store; he could have made good settlements, and had a very substantial income outside and beyond his profession, and his prospects in the service were excellent. He had already done extremely well. His shyness was only social. As a soldier he had proved himself to be as brave as a lion. He had seen much service, had gained entirely through his own gallantry much and rapid promotion; and there were many who prophesied, not without reason, that he would assuredly become a very distinguished man. To be a brevet lieutenant-colonel, to wear the Victoria Cross and the Order of the Bath, while still only a regimental captain and thirty-five years of age, was a good earnest of greater honors yet to come. No wonder that people went out of their way to be civil to him. In town he might have had a dozen invitations, and to the best houses, every night. In country quarters the local magnates were disposed to be especially gracious to him. He might have gone the whole round from one house to another for balls, shooting parties and meets.

A favorite amusement with him was to take long country walks. His regiment was quartered in a well-known Midland capital, a town somewhat choked and blackened by furnaces and soot, but within a mile or two were open roads margined by well-grown trees leading through uplands clothed with grass and grain. He pondered deeply as he walked, and built, as many of us do, castles upon airy foundations, none the less entrancing because they crumble speedily into dust. Randolph Braybrooke was ambitious, although so shy. He had high aims, and hoped to achieve them yet. That he might some day become famous and rise to the top of his profession was his dream.

He was striding along one summer's day, while more than usually preoccupied, when suddenly he was aroused by the sound of wheels rapidly overtaking him.

He looked round and saw a small pony-carriage approaching him at top speed. It had only one occupant—a lady—and this lady had lost all control over her horse. The pony had run away with her.

Braybrooke saw that he must stop the trap or the lady's life might be endangered. He had not much time to make up his mind, but he acted promptly and decisively. Instead of going to the runaway's head, he let the trap pass him, then caught hold and clambered in behind. To get over in front, take the reins, and with a firm, steady hand reduce the pony's speed, first to a canter, then to a trot, and finally to a walk, was not a difficult nor a lengthy job. This done, he looked to his companion.

"Little beast!" said the lady, with concentrated bitterness, and then fainted away.

Randolph was six foot high; so it was clear she did not mean him. Besides, she might be forgiven for strong language. But he felt very nervous as he looked at her white face and motionless figure. What should he do? Fainting fits were not much within his experience, but common sense told him to unloose her lace kerchief and open her dress at the throat. Then he stopped the trap, hitched the pony up to a gate, fetched some water in his hat, sprinkled it over the lady's face, and rubbed hard at her hands, from which, however, he had been unable to remove the gloves.

Presently the lady came to.

"Where am I? What is it? What has happened?" she exclaimed.

"Well out of bad business," said Randolph rather abruptly. You might have lost your life."

"Ah! now I remember. It was too terrible! I am very deeply indebted to you, I'm sure."

"Don't mention it. I'd have done the same thing for anybody. Can I be of any further service to you?"

And Randolph lifted his hat as though he meant to walk off.

"Oh, please don't leave me—not yet. I can never drive that little beast again. How am I to get home?"

"Is it far?"

"To Cherry Killingworth."

"Lady Killingworth's?"

"Yes; do you know her?"

"No—and I don't want to."

"That's civil, certainly, considering— Pray may I inquire the name of my preserver. My friends will be anxious to thank you."

"My name is Braybrooke—Randolph Braybrooke, of the Twenty-seventh Hussars."

"Oh, you're a soldier! How nice!" and the lady looked at Braybrooke with a keen searching glance, which might have been very encouraging to a less shy man.

"Are you an officer? What! a corporal?"

"No; a colonel."

"Colonel—how grand! Colonel's higher than corporal, isn't it?"

"A little," said Braybrooke, amused.

He began to feel a little more at home with this unsophisticated person.

"But now tell me—at least, if you don't mind—tell me who you are? It's n t usual to ask ladies their names; not abruptly, like that. But I do so want to know."

"Why?"

"I should like to call and inquire after you."

Randolph was getting on wonderfully.

"You don't mean it. Besides, you wouldn't go to Cherry Killingworth."

"I would—to see you."

"Not if you really knew who I was."

"Are you a relation of Lady Killingworth? No? A friend, then? How are you there, then—in what capacity?"

"A very humble one."

"Companion?"

"Not even that. Try again."

"Cook, perhaps?"

She burst out laughing.

"No, not quite—only lady's maid."

And she narrowly watched the effect of her announcement upon the other.

Randolph looked at her fixedly, and, without answering, examined her from head to foot. She was well—almost perfectly—dressed. A good fur-lined cloak, a quiet but fashionable hat, neat boots—her whole *tournoure* was that of a lady born and bred.

"Well? I think you're very rude, staring at me like that——" and her eyes became moist as though she were going to cry.

"Upon my word, I apologize; but I could never have believed it. You seem—I mean that you look such—a perfect lady," he blurted out——

"That you're shocked to find I'm only a lady's maid. It may be odd, but I will explain. But perhaps you won't mind driving me toward the Hall, and I will tell you as we go along. You see, I'm Lady Killingworth's foster sister; they say we're very much alike——"

"I congratulate Lady Killingworth," said Randolph, very heartily.

"Very much alike," went on the other, without noticing the compliment, "and she's always so kind—let's me wear things when they're still quite fresh, and let's me do always as much as I like. Driving that pony—little beast! was a fad of mine; father said——"

"Is you're father also in her ladyship's service?"

"Yes; he's coachman, and father said I should be sure to come to harm, and I have, as you know better than me. If it had not been for you I should have been killed. I am so grateful to you, I assure you—" and she looked up at him once more with bright, glistening eyes.

"I'm devilish glad I was never sworn at Highgate."

"What do you mean?"

"Part of the oath is that if you can kiss the mistress you mustn't kiss the maid. Now, I have no desire to kiss Lady Killingworth, but——"

"I don't understand you."

And the lady's-maid again looking at Randolph with such wide, innocent eyes that he could not believe her demureness assumed.

Randolph Braybrooke felt rebuked, and was studiously respectful in his manner for the rest of the drive. But when they approached the lodge gates, and his pretty companion begged him to get out and leave her to drive in alone, he ventured to express a hope that they might meet again.

"Oh, no, no, no!" she said seriously, but, with just a touch of coquetry in her voice and manner, "that must not be. It would be quite wrong."

"Then I shall say you're most ungrateful."

"But my father will call and thank you; and I shall always think of you as my brave and gallant preserver."

"If you won't promise to let me see you again, I shall come after you."

"To Lady Killingworth's?"

"No, to her coachman's; and have tea in the harness room with the rest of the family."

"That would not be a fitting place for you. Sooner than that I'd——"

"There, I knew you wouldn't be so hard-hearted. When and where shall we next meet?"

Louisa Buffham was not the first weak woman who has yielded to man's beguiling tongue. A few days later she met Braybrooke on the road not far from where the accident had so nearly occured, and this became their regular trysting-place day after day for weeks and weeks together.

It was the old, old story. The attractiveness which had won Braybrook at their first meeting presently deepened into real affection; a closer acquaintance proved this charming girl to be as clever, intelligent and well-educated as she was good-looking. How strongly Braybrooke felt toward her he never realized till marching orders came for his regiment, and he was on the eve of parting from his love.

Then he pressed her to go with him.

On hearing this she was sorely agitated, and seemed unable to frame a word of reply.

"Do not misunderstand me," he went on. "I am asking you to become my honored, well-beloved wife."

She looked up directly—her face bright and jubilant in spite of the fast-flowing tears.

"I knew you were a true man, Randolph, as good and honest as you are brave," and she kissed him solemnly.

It was arranged that he should go to the Hall next day and ask old Buffham for his daughter's hand. This interview with a future father-in-law has shaken many a strong man's nerves. Braybrooke's native shyness was not diminished by the fact that the stern parent was only a coachman who would probably not object to having a colonel for a son.

It was a relief to Randolph, therefore when Louisa met him at the lodge gates saying, "Father is out driving my lady. They have gone to Mirkborough, and will not be back for an hour at least. Come, I'll show you over the house, dear. Her ladyship will not mind."

She led him from room to room—through picture-gal'ery, corridors, and banquetting-hall. It was a grand old house, which, with a large income, had been left to Lady Killingworth by her late husband, altogether as her own. It was well kept up; the richly-furnished, but charming, home of a woman of cultured intelligence and great natural taste.

The two lovers ended with my lady's boudoir, and, this seen, where on the point of retracing their steps, when Louisa, with a terrified look, cried suddenly: "My lady!" and ran out of the room.

Braybrooke did not know which way to turn. His shyness took absolute possession of him; and when, a minute or two later, the door opened to odmit a lady, he was ready to sink into his boots under the burthen of *mauvaise honte.*

"Really—this intrusion," began Lady Killingworth, and Braybrooke met the glance of a stately dame in a long cloak. She wore a wide flopping hat, under which he saw a face strongly resembling that of his beloved Louisa, where it not for the abundant curls of towy yellow hair.

"Why, it's Randolph Braybrooke," cried another voice, and our friend recognized the deep bass of the colonel of his regiment. "Have the Twenty-seventh turned burglars?"

"I was brought here, Lady Killingworth, by your maid."

"My maid?"

"Your maid—and my affianced wife."

"Braybrooke!" said the Colonel, "you must be mad."

"Sir," added Lady Killingworth, "this is a sorry way of getting out of a scrape, surely you might leave the poor girl's name alone,"

"It is true, perfectly true, upon my word."

"She is not your equal in any way. She is far beneath you in station."

"In most ways she is my superior. As to station, mine is not much, but she shall share it, and I will, please God, raise her to one yet higher."

"You are quite determined?"

"Perfectly."

"Then the farce is at an end," and Lady Killingworth, removing wig and cloak, disclosed that sweet Louisa Buffham and she were one.

"Forgive me; I was trifling at first, but I went on to try and find out, as I have done, whether your heart was really made of pure solid gold."

A Child's Lonely Grave.

That afternoon I found something I had never seen before—a little grave alone in a wide pasture which had once been a field. The nearest house was two miles away, but by hunting for it I found a very old cellar, where the child's home must have been, not very far off, along the slope. It must have been a great many years ago that the house had stood there; and the small slate headstone was worn away by the rain and wind, so there was nothing to be read, if indeed there had ever been any letters on it. I had looked many a storm in the face, and many a red sunset. I suppose the woods near by had grown and been cut, and grown again since it was put there. There was an old sweetbriar bush growing on the short little grave, and in the grass underneath I found a ground sparrow's nest. It was like a little neighborhood, and I have felt ever since as if I belonged to it; and I wondered then if one of the young ground sparrows was not always sent to take the nest when the old ones are done with it, so they came back in the spring year after year to live there, and there were always the stone and the sweetbriar bush and the birds to remember the child. It was such a lonely place in the wide field under the sky, and yet it was so comfortable, too; but the sight of the little grave at first touched me strangely, and I tried to picture to myself the procession that came out of the house the day of the funeral, and I thought of the mother in the evening after all the people had gone home, and how she missed the baby, and kept seeing the new grave out here in the twilight as she went about her work. I suppose the family moved away, and so all the rest were buried elsewhere.

I often think of this place, and I link it in my thoughts with something I saw once in the water when I was out at sea. A little boat that some child lost, that had drifted down the river and out at sea; too long a voyage, for it was a sad little wreck, with its white sail of a handbreadth half under water, and its twine rigging trailing astern. It was a silly little boat, and no loss, except to its owner, to whom it seemed as brave and proud a thing as any ship of the line to you and me. It was a shipwreck of his small hopes, I suppose, and I can see it now, the toy of the great winds and waves, as it floated on its way, while I sailed on mine out of sight of land.

A little grave is forgotten by everybody but me, I think. The mother must have found the child again in heaven a very long time ago; but in the winter I shall wonder if the snow has covered it well, and next year I shall go to see the sweetbriar bush when it is in bloom. God knows what use that life was, the grave is such a short one, and nobody knows whose little child it was; but perhaps a thousand people in the world to-day are better because it brought a little love into the world that was not there before.—*Sarah E. Jewett.*

MR. LINCOLN used to tell a story about a big Hoosier who came to Washington during the war and called on a street Arab for a shine. Looking at the tremendous boots before him he called out to a brother shiner across the street: "Come over and help me, Jimmy. I've got an army contract!"